

AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT.

Some Very Pertinent Remarks Concerning Our Normal School.

Address of Prof. Miles, at the Opening of the Normal School of New Mexico.

The speech of Prof. Miles, at the opening of the normal school on the 3rd inst., was unavoidably crowded out of our last issue. We publish it this week in full. The professor said:

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF SILVER CITY, AND PUPILS OF THE NORMAL SCHOOL: Having listened to the excellent address of Governor Ricketts, who has told you so ably and eloquently of education and its growth in New Mexico, you must conclude that there is nothing left for me to say on that subject. When you have heard an extemporaneous address which will be delivered by Hon. J. J. Bell on behalf of Silver City and her citizens, you will conclude that there is no place for me either. Also when Prof. Selby has addressed you on behalf of the teachers, the normal school and their functions, you will see clearly that there is nothing left for me to say in that connection. Then what am I here for? You might infer that I am here to speak for myself, but no, there is another body to be represented here today. The board of regents, with whom rests the responsibility of organizing and maintaining the normal school, asks your sympathy and co-operation in the arduous work that devolves upon them. It was intended that Mr. Hadley should represent the board on this occasion, but as he is absent, I have been asked to speak a few words in his stead.

I claim no credit to myself for the position I occupy in relation to primitive education in New Mexico, but I consider it an honor to have taught in the first public school building in the territory, the building across the street, built by the independent school district of Silver City. I am proud to have been one of the first county superintendents to operate under the first real public school law of New Mexico and as far as I know was the first county superintendent to read a paper before the territorial educational convention, and now, to be a member of the first board of regents of the first normal school, is an honor which I assure you I shall endeavor to merit by executing faithfully the duties devolved upon me.

"Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of the legislature and magistrates in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences and all seminaries of them."

The above quotation is reflected in the constitution of the state of Massachusetts and exhibits the spirit of the legislature of that state in 1780. In line of the policy of the state of Massachusetts and before our national government had fairly crystallized into form, in 1787, a grant of land was made for the main-

tenance of public schools, the act declaring "that religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

In 1790, General Washington, in his opening message to congress, reflects the spirit in which our great nation was founded in these words:—"knowledge is, in every country, the surest basis of happiness. In one in which the measures of the government receive their impressions so immediately as ours from the sense of the community, it is proportionately essential." Later on in his farewell address he gives this oft quoted injunction:—"promote as an object of primary importance, institutions for the diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of public opinion gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened." Further down the line another ray of light impinges upon the retina of the nation's intellectual eye, and we hear the silver tongued sage of Monticello earnestly proclaiming his convictions to the people in these memorable words:—"I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resources most to be relied on for ameliorating the condition, promoting the virtue and advancing the happiness of man." In response to the sacred injunction of our greatest statesman, the government has set aside seventy-two sections of the public domain to each state and territory, making over a hundred and forty millions of acres of land donated to the states for educational purposes. This spirit has animated national and state legislation down to the present time and many of the states have supplemented these gifts by other grants and have nearly all made liberal provisions for education by direct taxation.

Today we stand by another mile stone marking the progress of the star of empire as it moves westward. We see with pride our territorial legislature in February, 1891, extend to the children of New Mexico the means of a primary education. Actuated by the same beneficent spirit and wise principles, it has given us, by successive steps, respectively, our agricultural college, school of mines, university and normal schools.

It is very important to New Mexico that we should have efficient work in the lower grades. To more than nine-tenths of our population the common schools are at present not only the basis but the superstructure and the apex of the only system within their grasp. This is especially true of our rural districts and mining camps. When to these facts it is added that the country schools do not continue in session on an average of more than six months in a year, and that many of the children fail to reap the advantages that may be offered, for more than three or four months annually, we shall have some of the more prominent features of the difficult problem clearly before us. In the acts of 1891 we have a section requiring parents or guardians to send to school at least three months in the year able bodied children between the ages of eight and sixteen years. In this connection says John Stuart Mill, "the uncultivated cannot be judges of the cultivated. Those who need most to be wiser and better usually desire it least, and if they desired it, would be incapable of finding their way to it by their own light. Education, therefore, is one of the things which it is admissible in principle that

the government should provide for the people. The case is one to which the reasons of the non-interference principle do not necessarily nor universally extend." If parents or those on whom children depend have the power of obtaining for them an education and fail to do it, they commit a double breach of duty toward the children themselves and toward the members of the community who are liable to suffer from the consequences of ignorance and want of education in their fellow citizens. It is therefore an allowable exercise of government to impose upon parents or guardians the legal obligation of giving elementary instruction to children. This cannot be done without taking measures to insure that such instruction shall be accessible to them, and our legislators have seen fit in their past experience to make this wise provision.

Progress in all government has been found in self government: This is by self activity, not by repression from others: Therefore, we apprehend, that our public school system is inefficient and incomplete without normal schools. If we undertake to have our citizens educated, our honor is staked upon having them well educated. The end can be attained best by teachers who have been trained thoroughly in the common branches; who are inspired with an ideal such as only higher studies can give and who are ambitious to realize that ideal in the public schools. Our Normal school will be supported by the people for the people. Its course of study should dip down to reach the public school so that a boy or girl may begin there to be fitted to teach. The same course, if completed to graduation, should fit its students to be a power in the school room and in the social world. The communities throughout our territory are furnished by nature with the material support of education, but the training and culture which teachers must have, if they are to elevate the schools can be provided only by the collective wealth and wisdom of the state. There are three immediate agencies involved in education:—the teacher, the child and nature. A classification of facts, the principles and the laws which are embraced in their "inner connection" constitutes the science of pedagogics: This inner connection exists among objects of nature among the various powers of the mind, and between nature and the mind. That a teacher may understand this inner law, he must have a knowledge of nature and mind and their relations. Out of this arises an understanding of the training of his preparation. A prerequisite of this preparation must consist of a careful review of the branches required to be taught in our common schools; it being of course the first requisite of a teacher, that he should himself know well that which he is to aid others in learning. Without going beyond the three branches, reading, writing and arithmetic, I venture to say, that a man or woman who possesses a thorough knowledge of them is as rare as one of corresponding eminence in any of the learned professions.

The second part of instruction in a normal school is the art of teaching, to know the matter to be taught, and to know it thoroughly, are of themselves, though essential, not all that is required. There is a peculiar art of teaching, the details of this branch are inexhaustible, but it is hoped that the most important principles may be brought within such a